



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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## Effective Immediately - Gulf of Mexico Gray Triggerfish Catch Limit Reduction NOAA Seeks Public Comment *Comment Period Ends June 13, 2012* *Small Entity Compliance Guide*

NOAA Fisheries Service announces new regulations to control the harvest of gray triggerfish in the Gulf of Mexico. The temporary rule reduces the catch limits and sets commercial and recreational annual catch targets (quotas). It published in the *Federal Register* today, May 14, 2012, and is effective immediately. This rule will be effective for 180-days. NOAA Fisheries Service may extend the rule, but needs to allow the public to comment on the rule before an extension can take place.

Gulf of Mexico gray triggerfish are overfished (the population is too low) and undergoing overfishing (too many are being caught each year). The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) asked NOAA Fisheries Service to put in place temporary regulations to reduce gray triggerfish overfishing while they work on long-term measures to end overfishing and let the population increase in size.

To reduce overfishing, NOAA Fisheries Service's temporary rule reduces the recreational and commercial annual catch limits by approximately 50 percent to 241,200 and 64,100 pounds whole weight, respectively. The rule also sets annual catch targets (quotas) at 217,100 and 60,900 pounds whole weight, respectively.

### Definitions

**Annual catch limit** is the highest level of landings that is acceptable to maintain a healthy stock size.

**Annual catch targets** provide a buffer to account for management uncertainty around the annual catch limit. If fishermen catch the annual catch target within the year, they cannot catch gray triggerfish until the next year. This makes gray triggerfish annual catch targets into quotas.

NOAA Fisheries Service needs to make sure gray triggerfish quotas are not exceeded within the year. There is already a quota closure for the commercial

sector, so no additional measures are needed. However, there is no in-season closure for the recreational sector. This temporary rule includes a provision to close the recreational sector if it catches its quota.

Other gray triggerfish regulations are unchanged. This includes the commercial and recreational minimum size limit of 14-inches fork length and inclusion of gray triggerfish in the recreational 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit.

For more information, a Frequently Asked Questions document can be found at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/GrouperSnapperandReefFish.htm>.

### Commenting on the temporary rule

The temporary rule is effective for 180 days after it publishes. It can be extended for another 186 days provided the public has a chance to comment on the rule. It is unlikely the Council and NOAA Fisheries Service will be able to complete and implement long-term measures within the 180-day period. Therefore, NOAA Fisheries Service invites the public to comment on the rule, and whether it should be extended. This will help the agency determine if a rule extension is needed or some other type of action is required. The comment period on the rule ends on June 13, 2012.

### Dates and Addresses

Comments on this amendment must be received no later than **June 13, 2012**, in order to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. Electronic copies of the rule and supporting documentation may be obtained from the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Web site at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org>, or from NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office's Web site at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. You may submit comments from May 14, 2012, to June 13, 2012, by either of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments (enter N/A in the required field if you wish to remain anonymous). Enter "**NOAA-NMFS-2012-0085**" in the search field and click on "search". Once you locate the document "TITLE," with the ID listed as "**NOAA-NMFS-2012-0085**," click the "Submit a Comment" link in that row. This will display the comment web form. You can then enter your submitter information (unless you prefer to remain anonymous), and type your comment on the web form. You can also attach additional files (up to 10MB) in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only. For further assistance with

submitting a comment, see the "Commenting" section at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!faqs> or the Help section at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

- Mail: Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin will not be considered.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This bulletin provides only a summary of the information about the rule. Discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

Need more information on these topics?

Southeast Regional Office's Web page:  
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.